

3.11 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

EO 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* requires that Fort Bliss make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. For the LEIS, census data was used to estimate the number of persons in minority populations and low-income populations living in areas that could potentially be affected by the project and alternatives. This information, which is included below, describes an aspect of the baseline conditions for the project area.

EO 13045, *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*, requires that each federal agency identify and assess environmental health risks and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children, and address such risks in their policies, programs, activities and standards. Further, for regulatory actions subject to the EO, agencies must now conduct an evaluation of environmental health and safety effects on children, and include an explanation of why the planned regulation is preferable to other potentially effective and reasonably feasible alternatives considered by the agency.

The ROI for environmental justice is a three-county area consisting of Otero County, New Mexico, where McGregor Range is located; as well as Doña Ana County, New Mexico, located west of Otero County; and, El Paso County, Texas.

3.11.1 Minority Populations and Low-income Populations

For purposes of this analysis, minority populations and low-income populations were defined as follows:

Minority populations are persons of Hispanic origin of any race; Blacks; American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts; and Asian or Pacific Islanders (without double-counting persons of Hispanic origin who are also contained in the latter groups).

Low-income populations are persons living below the poverty level, which is \$12,674 for a family of four in 1989, and adjusted for household size, as reported in the 1990 census.

Estimates of these two populations were then developed using data from the *1990 Census of Population and Housing* (Department of Commerce, 1992a) that estimates each of the separate categories contained in these definitions.

In 1990, the three-county ROI contained 779,048 persons, of which 538,423 persons (69.1 percent) were minorities, and 198,378 persons (25.5 percent) were living below the poverty level.

Otero County, New Mexico, contained 51,928 persons, of which 18,591 persons (35.8 percent) were minorities, and 8,404 persons (16.2 percent) were living below the poverty level. Persons of Hispanic origin comprised 12,380 persons (23.8 percent). Blacks comprised 5.3 percent of the county's population (2,755 persons), and Asian or Pacific Islanders comprised 966 persons (1.9 percent). In addition, American Indians, Eskimos, or Aleuts comprised 2,984 persons (5.7 percent) of the population. The Mescalero Apache Reservation is located in northeastern Otero County, with small, unpopulated portions also located in Lincoln County, New Mexico. Approximately 2,664 persons lived on the reservation in 1990, of which 97.0 percent were minority and 48.4 percent were living below the poverty level.

Doña Ana County, New Mexico, contained a population of 135,510, of which 80,234 (59.2 percent) were minorities, and 34,676 (25.6 percent) were living below the poverty level. A total of 76,448 persons (56.4

**McGregor Range Land Withdrawal
Legislative Environmental Impact Statement**

percent) were of Hispanic origin. In addition, 2,172 persons (1.6 percent) are Black; 1,164 persons (0.9 percent) are Asian or Pacific Islander; and 1,009 persons (0.7 percent) of the population are American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut.

El Paso County contained 591,610 persons, of which 439,598 persons (74.3 percent) were minorities, and 155,298 (26.3 percent) were living below the poverty level. Persons of Hispanic origin comprised 411,619 persons (69.6 percent) of the total population. A total of 22,110 persons (3.7 percent) of the population is Black; 6,485 persons (1.1 percent) Asian or Pacific Islander; and 2,590 persons (0.4 percent) American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut. For each county, some persons in the latter categories are also included in the subtotal for persons of Hispanic origin. In order to avoid double-counting these persons, they are added in only once when the minority population total is calculated.

The three-county ROI has 131 census tracts. There are 13 census tracts in Otero County, 23 in Doña Ana County, and 95 in El Paso County. For the analysis of baseline conditions, individual census tracts are assumed to contain disproportionately high percentages of minority populations if either of two criteria are met: (1) the percentage of persons in minority populations in the census tract exceeds the average for the ROI, which is 69.1 percent; or (2) the minority population exceeds 50.0 percent, indicating that in that census tract, minorities constitute a majority of the persons who could potentially be affected by the project. Individual census tracts are assumed to contain disproportionately high percentages of low-income persons if the percentage of persons living below the poverty level in the census tract exceeds the ROI average, which is 25.5 percent for the three counties.

Figure 3.11-1 shows disproportionately low-income and minority census tracts in the ROI. Minorities comprise more than 50 percent of the total population in 93 out of 131 census tracts in the ROI, or 71.0 percent of all census tracts. The minority population percentage exceeds the ROI average of 69.1 percent in 68 of the 131 census tracts, or 51.9 percent of the time. The percentage of the population living below the poverty level exceeds the ROI total of 25.5 percent in 60 of the 131 census tracts, or 45.8 percent of the time.

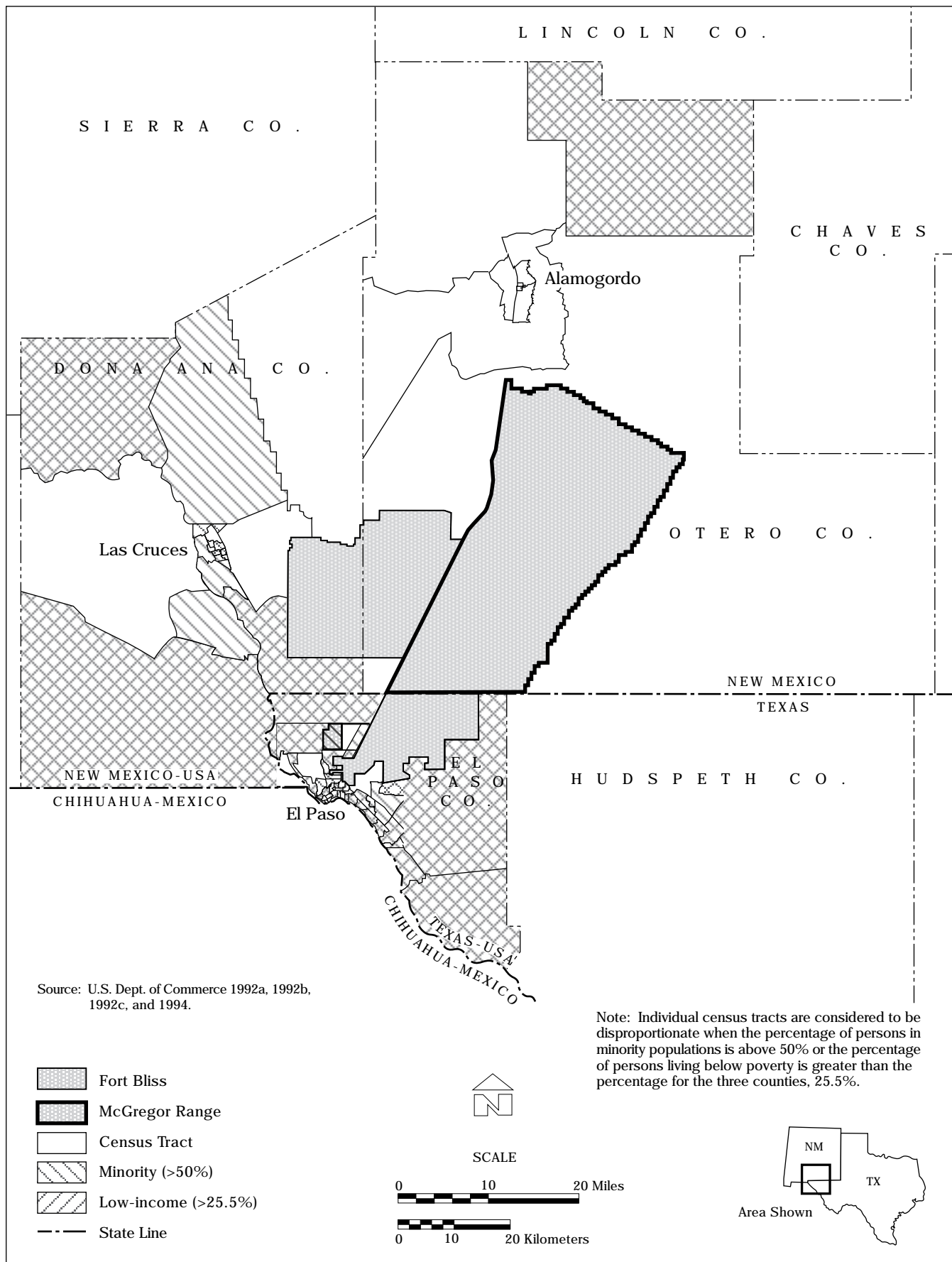


Figure 3.11-1. Census Tracts With Disproportionate Low-income and Minority Populations.

McGEIS 116d.vb.9.1.98

This Page Intentionally Left Blank